BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

2024

BLACK IS...

BOOKLIST FOR ADULTS, TEENS, & CHILDREN

BPL.ORG

The Black Is Booklist

is a list of recent books for all ages concerning the African American experience. It is published as part of the Boston Public Library's observance of Black History Month each year.

Compiled by Boston Public Library staff:

Ritse Adefolalu
Youth Services Librarian, Lower Mills Branch

Liz Blake
Programs & Community Outreach Librarian, Fields Corner Branch

Kirsten DeCortin
Black Is Secretary, Reader Services Librarian, Central Library

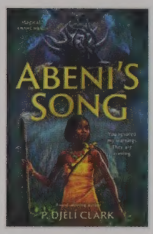
Christina Jones
Branch Librarian, South End Branch

Maija Meadows Hasegawa
Assistant Neighborhood Services Manager, Branches

On the Cover: Bill Bellamy, author of *Top Billin': Stories of Laughter, Lessons, and Triumph.*

Photograph by Matt Sayles.

CHILDREN



Abeni's Song

By P. Djèlí Clark

In this fantasy epic inspired by the African Diaspora, young Abeni's world is turned upside-down when mysterious warriors abduct the people of her village. As she is forced into an old witch's apprenticeship, she gains the skills she'll need to save her people.

J SCIFI FANTASY CLARK P

Big

By Vashti Harrison

A young girl with a love for ballet finds that as she grows people around her begin to say hurtful things about her size. As she goes through a difficult journey to self-love, her story is told through brilliantly sparse text and striking imagery.

J PICTURE HARRISON V

Cookie Monsters

By Erika J. Kendrick

Brooklyn Ace won't settle for anything but first place in this year's Valentine World Scouts cookie selling contest. There's just one problem: Piper Parker, the rich new girl who quickly bewitches the whole seventh grade. Who will be the next Cookie Queen?

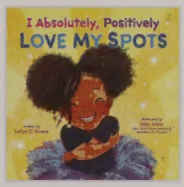
J FICTION KENDRICK E

Curlfriends: New in Town

By Sharee Miller

Once again, Charlie faces the first day at a new school. She's always had trouble making friends and decides reinventing her image might do the trick. Luckily, she meets a group of friendly misfits who help her realize there's no need to hide her true self.

J GRAPHIC CURLFRIE



I Absolutely, Positively Love My Spots

By Lid'ya C. Rivera and Nina Mata (ill.)

The unique beauty of vitiligo is poetically celebrated in this delightfully empowering picture book, which includes a personal letter from the author and some facts about the skin condition.

J PICTURE RIVERA L

Ketanji: Justice Jackson's Journey to the U.S. Supreme Court

By Kekla Magoon and Laura Freeman (ill.)

The first black woman to serve on the Supreme Court, Ketanji Brown Jackson has led a life full of outstanding achievement. This uplifting biography follows her path from high school, to Harvard, to public defending, and finally, to the country's highest court.

J BIOG KF8745.J25 M34 2023

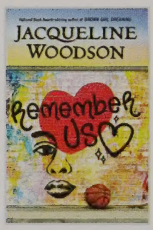
available as an audiobook
available as an eBook
graphic novel

Link + Hud: Heroes by a Hair

By Jarrett Pumphrey and Jerome Pumphrey

Lincoln and Hudson Dupré are masters of imagination, constantly taking on epic quests and feats. Unfortunately, the brothers' unbridled creativity has scared off every babysitter in the neighborhood. Will the boys finally meet their match in the old-school Ms. Joyce?

J GRAPHIC LINK AND HUD



Remember Us

By Jacqueline Woodson

Between the house fires in her neighborhood, her growing passion for basketball, and her waning connection with her old friends, Sage is going through a lot of changes this summer. But one of them, her new friend Freddy, becomes an ally in dealing with the pain of transition.

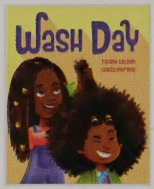
J FICTION WOODSON J

School Trip

By Jerry Craft

New kid Jordan and his friends from Riverdale Academy are off on a trip to Paris. As an artist, Jordan is eager to see the renowned City of Lights. Of course, nothing is ever smooth sailing for Jordan, and last-minute chaperone changes are just the tip of the Eiffel Tower.

J GRAPHIC SCHOOL TRIP



Wash Day

By Tiffany Golden and Lhaiza Morena (ill.)

Today is hair-washing day, and Jelaya is not looking forward to all that tugging, scrubbing, and general discomfort. But her big sister Jazmin has a few tricks up her sleeve to change wash day forever.

J PICTURE GOLDEN T

We Are Your Children Too: Black Students, White Supremacists, and the Battle for America's Schools in Prince Edward County, Virginia

By P. O'Connell Pearson

A fascinating middle-grade account of a Virginia county that chose to close all its public schools rather than integrate. While affluent white families built a new private school, the Black community banded together to teach their children at home.

J LC214.22.V8 P43 2023

TEEN

All You Have to Do

By Autumn Allen

In 1968, Kevin participates in a protest again Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination that shuts down his Ivy League campus. Thirty years later, Gibran challenges his own prestigious school's hypocrisy amidst controversy over the Million Man March.

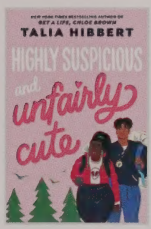
TEEN FICTION ALLEN A

The Davenports

By Krystal Marquis

As one of the few Black families of immense wealth and status in 1910 America, the Davenports live surrounded by servants, crystal chandeliers, and endless parties, but their glamorous world turns upside down when the eldest daughter meets a charismatic civil rights' leader.

TEEN FICTION MARQUIS K



Highly Suspicious and Unfairly Cute

By Talia Hibbert

Forced to work as a team for the chance to win a grand prize, two ex-best-friends must trudge through not just mud and dirt, but also their messy past. Has too much time passed for them to rekindle their feelings for one another?

TEEN FICTION HIBBERT T

Friday I'm in Love

By Camryn Garrett

It might be too late to have a Sweet Sixteen, but Mahalia is determined to have the best coming-out party ever: a singing, dancing, rainbow-cake-eating celebration of queerness on her own terms! A love letter to Black joy and queer pride.

TEEN FICTION GARRETT C

The King is Dead

By Benjamin Dean

Heavy is the crown James has been born to wear, especially as the first Black heir to the British throne. But with his father's recent passing and a new boyfriend to hide, James is woefully unprepared for the sudden shine of public scrutiny.

TEEN FICTION DEAN B

The Girl I Am, Was, and Never Will Be

By Shannon Gibney

In this speculative memoir, Gibney explores possible timelines for her life by weaving together her true story of growing up as a mixed-Black transracial adoptee, with the fictional story of "Erin Powers," the name she was given at birth.

TEEN FICTION GIBNEY S

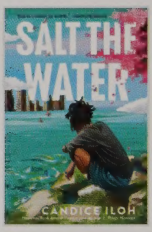
Promise Boys

By Nick Brooks

When the principal of their prep school is murdered on school premises, three students become the prime suspects. The trio must band together to track down the real killer before they are arrested. Or is the true culprit hiding among them?

TEEN FICTION BROOKS N

available as an audiobook
available as an eBook
graphic novel

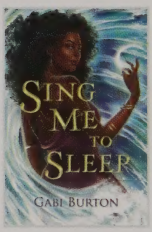


Salt the Water

By Candice Iloh

A novel-in-verse follows Cerulean Gene, a nonbinary Black teenager, as they deal with the ramifications of dropping out of high school, cope with a family emergency, and dream of living off-the-grid with their friends.

TEEN FICTION ILOH C



Sing Me to Sleep

By Gabi Burton

As a soldier and assassin, Saoirse Sorkova lies about her identity as a siren to avoid execution. But to her family, Saoirse tells the biggest lie of all: that she can control her powers and doesn't constantly grapple with the impulse to kill.

TEEN SCIFI FANTASY BURTON G

A Song of Salvation

By Alechia Dow

The teen reincarnation of the god of creation joins forces with a grumpy pilot to save a beloved space DJ and stop an intergalactic war.

TEEN SCIFI FANTASY DOW A

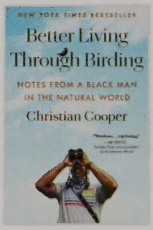
You're Not Supposed to Die Tonight

By Kalynn Bayron

Charity plays the "final girl" at Camp Mirror Lake, where she and her summer crew recreate scenes from a classic slasher film. But when a coworker ends up dead, Charity's role in the full-contact terror game suddenly becomes all too real.

TEEN FICTION BAYRON K

MEMOIR

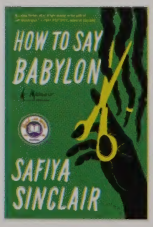


Better Living Through Birding: Notes from a Black Man in the Natural World

By Christian Cooper

Cooper, whose encounter with a dogwalker went viral in 2020, invites readers into the world of birds and shares lessons from a life spent looking up in this genre-defying blend of memoir, travelogue, and introduction to the art of birding.

BIOG QL684.N7 C66 2023



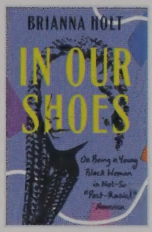
How to Say Babylon: A Memoir

By Safiya Sinclair

The author tells the story of her struggle to find her own voice as a woman and poet, as she learned to break free of her rigid Rastafarian upbringing, where she was ruled by her father's strict patriarchal views and repressive control.

BIOG PS3619.I56847 Z46 2023

available as an audiobook
available as an eBook
graphic novel

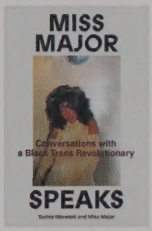


In Our Shoes: On Being A Young Black Woman in Not-so "post-racial" America

By Brianna Holt

Using pop culture and her own lived experiences, Holt's memoir incorporates cultural critique and dissects the stereotypes and preconceived notions that young Black women must overcome in America today.

BIOG E185.86 .H6955 2023



Miss Major Speaks: Conversations with a Black Trans Revolutionary

By Toshio Meronek and Miss Major Griffin-Gracy

A transgender elder and activist shares her legendary experiences of seeking justice, survival, and liberation; from participating in the Stonewall Riots to helping found one of America's first needle-exchange programs.

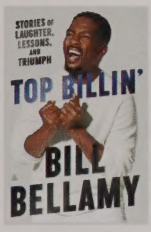
BIOG HQ77.8.M35 M47 2023

Sink

By Joseph Earl Thomas

Writing in third person, the author takes readers through the unceasing cruelty of his impoverished childhood towards a future where he finds salvation in geek culture, builds community, and loves on his own terms.

BIOG HV4999.C45 T496 2023

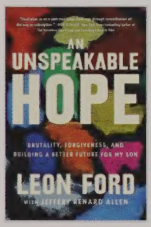


Top Billin': Stories of Laughter, Lessons, and Triumph

By Bill Belamy

This hilariously candid memoir from an MTV trailblazer, stand-up comedian, and actor is an intimate, entertaining, and heartfelt tour through the exclusive, elusive, and eternally iconic world of '90s pop culture.

BIOG PN2287.B415 A3 2023

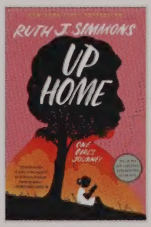


An Unspeakable Hope: Brutality, Forgiveness, and Building a Better Future for My Son

By Leon Ford

After being racially profiled and shot five times, Ford woke up in the hospital to discover that he was a new father — and paralyzed from the waist down. He reveals how he faced this new reality and discovered the power of forgiveness.

BIOG HV6250.3.U53 P584 2023

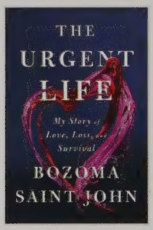


Up Home: One Girl's Journey

By Ruth J. Simmons

The power of family, community, and the classroom as vehicles to transform a person's life take center stage in this inspiring memoir from the daughter of sharecroppers who grew up to become the first Black president of an Ivy League university.

BIOG LA2311 .S56 2023

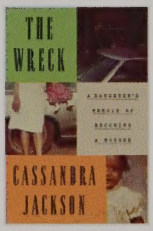


The Urgent Life: My Story of Love, Loss, and Survival

By Bozoma Saint John

Taking readers through the dizzying, numbing days of multiple griefs, the author shares her journey as she negotiates life as a woman determined to learn from tragedies to build a remarkable life worth living even when she feels broken.

BIOG HC102.5.S24 A3 2023



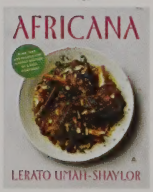
The Wreck: A Daughter's Memoir of Becoming a Mother

By Cassandra Jackson

Jackson exposes how the medical field has failed Black Americans, revealing her own harrowing journey of infertility treatments and revisiting the horrific car crash that took the lives of several of her family members in the 1960s.

BIOG E185.97.J227 A3 2023

EXPRESSIONS

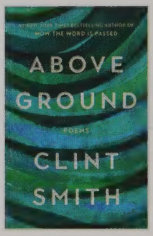


Africana

By Lerato Umah-Shaylor

With over 100 recipes and flavors, this cookbook is a savory celebration of African cuisine from a West African food writer, television personality, and cooking teacher.

TX725.A35 U43 2023



Above Ground

By Clint Smith

Smith's lyrical, narrative poems bring the reader on a journey not only through the early years of his children's lives, but through the changing world in which they are growing up.

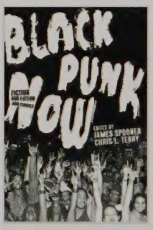
PS3619.M5727 A623 2023x

Black Earth Wisdom: Soulful Conversations with Black Environmentalists

By Leah Penniman

A collection of illuminating essays and interviews that explore Black people's spiritual and scientific connection to the land, waters, and climate.

GE195 .B55 2023



Black Punk Now

By Chris L. Terry and James Spooner (eds.)

This anthology of contemporary nonfiction, fiction, illustrations, and comics collectively describes punk today; showing all of the strains, styles, and identities of Black punk that are currently thriving.

ML3534.3 .B523 2023

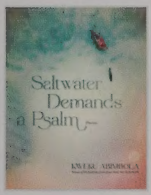
available as an audiobook
available as an eBook
graphic novel

I'm Always So Serious: Poems

By Karisma Price

Anchored in New Orleans and New York City, Price's poetry braids personal and public histories into a cultural reckoning of past and present.

PS3616.R5267 I4 2023x

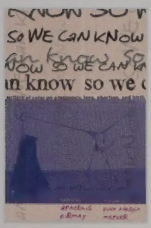


Saltwater Demands a Psalm: Poems

By Kweku Abimbola

A debut collection of poetry based in Black possibility, ancestry, and joy celebrates rituals of self-care, imagines alternate lives for those slain by police, and remixes and recenters African language and spiritual practice.

PS3601.B5636 S25 2023



So We Can Know: Writers of Color on Pregnancy, Loss, Abortion, and Birth

By Aracelis Girmay (ed.)

In this devastatingly beautiful anthology, the editor gathers complex and intimate pieces that illuminate the nuances of personal and collective histories, analyses, practices, and choices surrounding pregnancy.

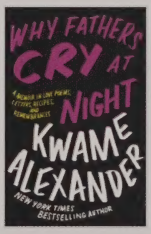
RG551 .S665 2023

Tekebash & Saba: Recipes and Stories From An East African Kitchen

By Saba Alemayoh

A mother-daughter duo tells their story, and the story of their homeland, Ethiopia, through the lens of food; demonstrating how sharing food from another culture can offer us all a path towards a world of empathy and understanding.

TX725.E84 A54 2023

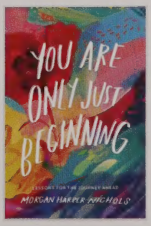


Why Fathers Cry at Night: A Memoir in Love Poems, Letters, Recipes, and Remembrances

By Kwame Alexander

In an intimate and non-traditional memoir full of heartfelt reminisces, family recipes, love poems, and personal letters, the author shares snapshots of his life, telling the stories of his parents, his relationships, and his daughters.

BIOG PS3601.L35388 Z46 2023



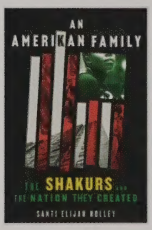
You Are Only Just Beginning: Lessons for the Journey Ahead

By Morgan Harper Nichols

This beautifully illustrated poetry collection from a bestselling author, inspires and empowers each reader on their own journey of self-discovery.

PS3614. I3465 2023x

NONFICTION



An Amerikan Family: The Shakurs and the Nation They Created

By Santi Elijah Holley

A history of the fight for Black liberation in the United States, as experienced and shaped by the Shakur family.

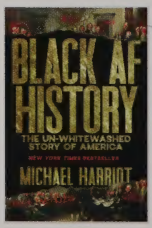
BIOG E185.93.N56 H65 2023

The Art of Ruth E. Carter: Costuming Black History and the Afrofuture, From Do the Right Thing to Black Panther

By Ruth E. Carter

Ruth E. Carter's work on Marvel's Black Panther not only brought Afrofuturism to the mainstream, but her achievements have been highlighted with Oscar wins and a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. In this definitive book, Carter shares her origins.

TT505.C3757 A3 2023

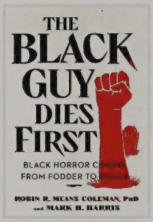


Black AF History: The Un-whitewashed Story of America

By Michael Harriot

A searingly smart and bitingly hilarious retelling of American history that corrects the record and showcases the perspectives and experiences of Black Americans.

E185.61 .H2495 2023

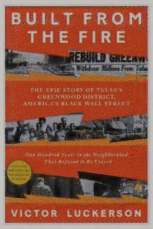


The Black Guy Dies First: Black Horror Cinema from Fodder to Oscar

By Robin R. Means Coleman and Mark H. Harris

A definitive and surprising exploration of the history of modern Black horror films — including *Get Out*, *Candyman*, and *Lovecraft Country* — from the creators behind the acclaimed documentary, *Horror Noire*.

PN1995.9.H6 M42 2023x

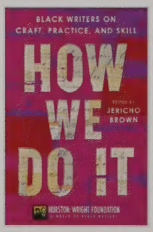


Built from the Fire: The Epic Story of Tulsa's Greenwood District, America's Black Wall Street

By Victor Luckerson

A multigenerational saga of a family and community in Tulsa's Greenwood district — also known as "Black Wall Street" — that in one century survived the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, urban renewal, and gentrification.

F704.T92 L84 2023



How We Do It: Black Writers on Craft, Practice, and Skill

By Jericho Brown (ed.)

More than 30 acclaimed writers — including diverse voices such as Nikki Giovanni, Jacqueline Woodson, and Barry Jenkins — reflect on their considerable expertise in this unique book on the craft of writing that focuses on the Black creative spirit.

PN187 .H69 2023

Pregnant While Black: Advancing Justice for Maternal Health in America

By Monique Rainford

Drawing on over twenty years of experience in obstetrics and gynecology, Dr. Monique Rainford offers this groundbreaking primer on adverse maternal-health outcomes for Black women and what can be done to improve them.

RG964.5.N4 P74 2023x

Take Care

By Chloe Pierre

This guide to cultivating joy prioritizes Black women and their experiences, encouraging them to take care of themselves in order to bring their best self into the world.

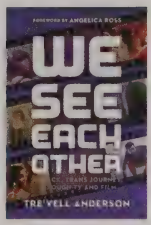
RA778.4.A36 P54 2023

The Wealth Decision: 10 Simple Steps to Achieve Financial Freedom and Build Generational Wealth

By Dominique Broadway

A self-made, first-generation multimillionaire reveals the eye-opening roadmap for becoming a millionaire and building a foundation of generational wealth.

HG179 .B7426 2023



We See Each Other: A Black, Trans Journey Through TV and Film

By Tre'vell Anderson

There has never been a book quite like this, nor is anyone more suited to write it than Black, trans journalist Anderson. With a critical eye and a sharp sense of humor, they knit together the history of trans people on screen with stories about growing up and formative experiences.

PN1995.9.T684 A53 2023

FICTION

Black Candle Women

By Diane Marie Brown

An intergenerational family drama with a magical twist follows the women of the Montrose family who live with a curse that leaves any person they fall in love with dead.

FICTION BROWN D

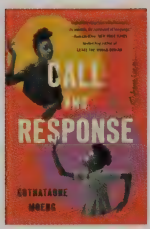
Blue Hour

By Tiffany Clarke Harrison

In this lyrical, powerful debut, an unnamed biracial narrator speaks in fragments about her journey and grief as an infertile mother struggling to conceive, while living with the fear of bringing a child into an unraveling America.

FICTION CLARKEHA T

available as an audiobook
available as an eBook
graphic novel



Call and Response: Stories

By Gothataone Moeng

Stories about the lives of ordinary families in present-day Botswana — as they navigate relationships, tradition, caretaking, and grieving in this swiftly changing world — feel both universal and new.

FICTION MOENG G

Family Lore

By Elizabeth Acevedo

Secrets threaten to reveal themselves as the Marte family prepares for a living wake celebration for Flor, who can predict the day someone will die.

FICTION ACEVEDO E

Hard Dough Homicide

By Olivia Matthews

Bakery owner Lyndsay is in over her head when she agrees to host a retirement dinner for high school principal (and tyrant) Emily Smith. Six guests arrive for the celebration, but only five survive. If Lyndsay can't help solve the crime, the bakery and her family will both be in trouble.

MYSTERY MATTHEWS O

Homebodies

By Tembe Denton-Hurst

Mickey finds herself thrown into the spotlight after she is fired from her job at *Wave* magazine and pens a manifesto documenting her mistreatment at the company. It soon goes viral as part of an industry-wide reckoning with the exploitation of Black employees.

FICTION DENTONHU T

House of Cotton

By Monica Brashears

A haunting and enchanting debut about a young Black woman in the South as she navigates loss, poverty, religion, and being haunted by her grandmother's ghost.

FICTION BRASHEAR M

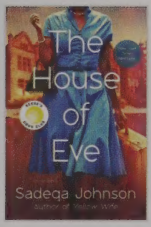
House of Gold

By C.T. Rwizi

On a colony on a distant planet, a separatist cult uses a secret underwater laboratory to create highly-intelligent, genetically-engineered "primes" with the hope of overthrowing their corporate aristocrat rulers.

SCIFI FANTASY RWIZI C

available as an audiobook
available as an eBook
graphic novel

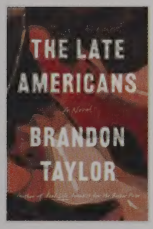


The House of Eve

By Sadeqa Johnson

A heartrending book about two young Black women who strive to overcome their circumstances as they navigate race, womanhood, and motherhood in 1950s America.

FICTION JOHNSON S

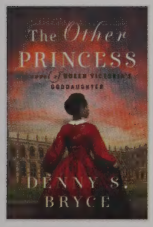


The Late Americans

By Brandon Taylor

In the shared and private spaces of Iowa City, a loose circle of friends and chosen family encounter, confront, and provoke in one another a turbulent year of self-discovery.

FICTION TAYLOR B

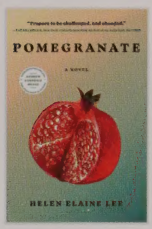


The Other Princess: A Novel of Queen Victoria's Goddaughter

By Denny S. Bryce

A stunning portrait of an African princess raised in Queen Victoria's court and adapting to life in Victorian England — based on the real-life story of a recently rediscovered historical figure, Sarah Forbes Bonetta.

FICTION BRYCE D



Pomegranate

By Helen Elaine Lee

Ranita is a queer Black woman recovering from opioid addiction who is recently out of prison. Every day is a fight to stay clean and regain custody of her two children as she battles the lasting effects of incarceration and addiction.

FICTION LEE H

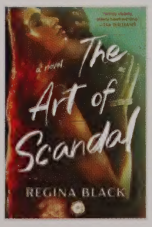
The Spite House

By Johnny Compton

On the run from a mysterious past, Eric and his two daughters move into Masson House, one of the most haunted places in Texas. This might be the lucky break Eric needs, if only the family can withstand the house's horrors and aren't driven mad like the caretakers before them.

FICTION COMPTON J

ROMANCE

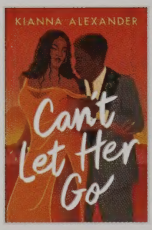


The Art of Scandal

By Regina Black

On the night of her husband's 40th birthday, Rachel Abbott reads a text from him meant for another woman. She is determined not to leave her marriage empty handed. Playing trophy wife, she meets Nathan Vasquez, but they must decide if losing everything is worth taking a chance on love.

FICTION BLACK R

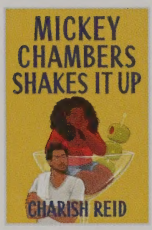


Can't Let Her Go

By Kianna Alexander

Coming from the same friend squad in Texas, Peaches and Jamie push past the boundaries of friendship into something deeper, but is this the right time for romance? Finding their true selves comes first, before they can hope to pursue a future of lasting love together.

ROMANCE ALEXANDE K



Mickey Chambers Shakes It Up

By Charish Reid

Professor Mickey Chambers, with a sunny disposition despite her illness, takes a job at a local bar owned by grumpy college student, Diego Costa. Their dynamic is complicated: they couldn't be more different from each other, and their mutual attraction is undeniable. Will their slow-burning romance last, or is it too shaken up to fail?

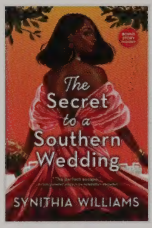
ROMANCE REID C

The Neighbor Favor

By Kristina Forest

Lily Green feels inadequate compared to her accomplished family. She's set to get a hold of her life, starting with finding a date. Her neighbor agrees to set her up with someone, but this simple favor is anything but, especially when he can't get her off his mind.

ROMANCE FOREST K



The Secret to a Southern Wedding

By Synithia Williams

In this story of love and second chances, Dr. Imani Kemp, Tallahassee's most popular OB-GYN, is forced to return home when her mother announces she's marrying a man she met online. She won't rest until her mom sees reason, but she also never expected sparks to fly with the groom's son...

ROMANCE WILLIAMS S

Single Dads Club

By Therese Beharrie

Single dad Rowan uproots his life and moves to South Africa, where he encounters Delilah Huntington, and is introduced to a circle of single dads for support. The more Delilah lends her help, the more Rowan begins to realize that family is what you make it.

ROMANCE BEHARRIE T

That Time I Got Drunk and Saved a Human

By Kimberly Lemming

In this funny fantasy novel, Cherry hates fairytales of princesses being rescued, but ironically finds herself stuck in a tower, held hostage by a dragon. Just when she thinks there's hope on the horizon, that hope is smashed to pieces by... another damn dragon!

Available in digital format only

available as an audiobook
available as an eBook
graphic novel

Token

By Beverley Kendall

The founder of a popular PR agency that helps diversity-challenged companies becomes embroiled in a PR scandal after her ex shows up needing help with his company's reputation.

ROMANCE KENDALL B

You've Been Served

By Kristen Alicia

Simone Alexander is chucking her life out the window: Bye Cali — Hello, law school! But when she encounters cute yet obnoxious classmate Silas Whitman, she soon learns that law school is nothing like the rom-coms!

ROMANCE ALICIA K

Zora Books Her Happy Ever After

By Taj McCoy

Zora has committed her life to her bookstore. When her favorite author and his grouchy friend visit, she's elated! But when the two men both show interest in her, she's torn. They're hiding something — a mystery she's determined to solve.

ROMANCE MCCOY T

BLACK IS...

BOOKLIST FOR ADULTS, TEENS, & CHILDREN

City of Boston
Michelle Wu, *Mayor*

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Boston Public Library
David Leonard, *President*

FREE TO ALL

Board of Trustees
Priscilla H. Douglas, *Chair*
Evelyn Arana-Ortiz, *Vice-Chair*
Navjeet Bal
Joe Berman
Jim Canales
Cheryl Cronin
John T. Hailer
Jeffrey B. Hawkins
Ray Liu
José C. Masso III
Porsha Olayiwola
Mike Rush, *State Senator*
Chynah Tyler, *State Representative*
Christian Westra
Lynn Perry Wooten

GCC/IBT

BPL.ORG